

## **SAMMY AWARD WINNERS FOR 2001**

### **Don Buss**

Don Buss teaches environmental science at Alki Middle School. A good indication of his ability to get students excited about salmon recovery is the fact that one of his students enthusiastically nominated him for this Sammy Award. Mr. Buss has continued the work of his predecessor, Ray Peterson, who began a program in 1991 to restore habitat along Whipple Creek in a forested area behind the school. At the beginning of each year, Mr. Buss's students learn about watershed health and the geology of the area. Then they monitor water quality for several weeks. In January, they place an egg box with coho salmon into the creek and observe its progress. When the eggs hatch in spring, students monitor the progress of the young fish before releasing them. From what they've learned about the creek, the students will then devise their own project to help improve the area. Mr. Buss believes that many of these students will grow up to have a life-long appreciation for environmental stewardship, including the importance of salmon recovery.

### **Clark County Home Builders Association**

Clark County Home Builders Association is helping to ensure that growth in Clark County takes a greener hue. Its Green Building Program rates buildings according to their environmental friendliness. The program promotes high environmental standards such as improved insulation and energy efficiency, use of alternative and environmentally sustainable building materials, and minimal impact on the surrounding environment. The Home Builders Association also offers an Erosion Prevention Course in partnership with Clark County. Successful completion of this course is required of all licensed contractors working within the county outside of the municipalities. The course promotes erosion prevention and control and helps contractors and developers meet the county's environmental regulations. By encouraging responsible use of environmental resources and helping to improve water quality in our streams and rivers, these Home Builders Association programs are improving conditions for fish and for people.

### **Clark Public Utilities**

For many years, Clark Public Utilities has been a leader in promoting salmon recovery in Clark County. Two major areas of effort include extensive habitat restoration work with landowners and a comprehensive environmental education program. The agency works with landowners on a voluntary basis to provide such services as fencing livestock away from waterways, replacing non-native vegetation with native plants along streambanks, and removing trash from sensitive areas. They have also funded a limiting factors analysis of the Salmon Creek watershed in preparation for some major habitat restoration work. CPU's impressive environmental education work includes programs such as Salmon in the Classroom, the Salmon Egg Box program, and a Wildlife Stewards training program. CPU was the driving force behind reviving the Columbia Springs Environmental Education Center. They were charter members of the Environmental Information Cooperative and founded the Columbia River Watershed Festival. Each year, their popular Home and Garden Idea Fair promotes environmental activities and training.

**High Valley Homeowners Association**

High Valley Homeowners Association is a group of over fifty homeowners who share about thirty acres of commons area used primarily for equestrian activities. The site includes a sensitive stretch of Salmon Creek that's a breeding area for steelhead and coho salmon. The association asked Clark Public Utilities to help identify ways to minimize erosion and enhance the stream corridor so they could still enjoy the commons area without negatively affecting salmon habitat. Together, they set about restoring 16 acres of sensitive riparian and wetland habitat. The work involved fencing horses and livestock away from the creek and removing non-native plants, replacing them with 15,000 native willows and over 5,000 other trees. Horse trails were moved away from the stream bank, and three homeowners agreed to move their fences back from the streambed. The completed project now serves the needs of both the High Valley Homeowners and the salmon.

**Fish First**

Fish First is a non-profit organization whose simple mission statement, "More and better fish in the Lewis River" belies the complexity of the work they do to improve conditions for salmon. With over 400 members, Fish First volunteers work with a coalition of big and small businesses, government agencies, conservation groups, commercial and sports fishers, and other organizations and individuals to restore selected streams and ecosystems along the North and East Forks of the Lewis River. Projects include stream bank restoration, culvert removal, rearing pond development, tree planting, channel stabilization, restoration of spawning beds, and other work. An essential ingredient to the success of these projects is the cooperation and support of the private land owners on whose land projects may occur. Fish First helps to educate landowners about the effects of farming and production activities to promote better coexistence with salmon and other wildlife.

**Tony Meyer**

Tony Meyer became concerned about our region's dramatically declining fish runs well before salmon and steelhead were listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. In his day job as a phone company lineman, Tony has seen firsthand the damage to fish habitat from stormwater runoff and human activities. His concern led him to found a group called the Camas/Washougal Wildlife League. The group restored habitat along the Little Washougal River and its tributaries, replacing culverts, modifying fish ladders, and placing salmon carcasses into the water for nutrient enhancement. Today, he's involved with numerous conservation groups. He recently obtained a \$375,000 grant for the Lower Columbian Fish Enhancement Group. As a board member for the group, Tony develops habitat restoration projects along the Columbia River from the Lewis River east to the Bonneville Dam.

**Barbara Podesta**

Barbara Podesta lives on 20 acres along Curtin Creek, a salmon bearing stream. Five years ago, much of her property was choked with blackberries and reed canary grass. Today, 16,000 trees later, ten acres of this land has been reclaimed for fish habitat. Mrs. Podesta could have leased the land or used it for other purposes. But because of her

concern for the environment, she contacted Clark Public Utilities after learning about their habitat restoration program. A small army of volunteers and Ameri-Corps workers removed non-native plant species and planted almost 16, native trees in their place. Shade from these trees will eventually keep the water cool for fish and provide other habitat benefits. The area was also fenced to keep cattle from fouling the water. At 86, Mrs. Podesta didn't do much of the physical work herself. But she provided volunteers with lots of encouragement and sometimes, home-baked cookies.

### **Bill Dygert**

Bill Dygert's accomplishments on behalf of the natural environment in Clark County and the region are so extensive and reflect such dedication, energy, and foresight, that it's not surprising that the person who nominated him stated, "No individual in Clark County is more deserving of a Sammy Award than Bill Dygert." Since the early 1970's Bill has been at the forefront of almost every major conservation effort in the county. He's been an instrumental force in bringing about some of our best known conservation organizations, programs, and projects. Some of these include the Conservation Futures Open Space Program, the Clark County Open space Commission, Columbia Land Trust, and Habitat Partners. In 1998, the state of Washington established by law the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board. As a volunteer, Bill is vice chair of the board. He also chairs the technical advisory committee. His leadership skills help to guide the board and its staff through its mission to restore fish, help the community understand the issues, and mobilize the community to respond.

### **Certificates of merit:**

Local Firefighters 452

Habitat Partners – Daybreak Park planting project

Carter, Malinowski, Shimano-Fish First project

Mary Beth Padden's class

Clark Conservation District Lockwood Creek project